

Docket Item # 4
BAR CASE #2006-0005

BAR Meeting
March 15, 2006

ISSUE: Demolition and capsulation

APPLICANT: Ted and Dolores Shine

LOCATION: 115 South Alfred Street

ZONE: CD/Commercial

BOARD ACTION, FEBRUARY 15, 2006: The Board combined discussion of docket item #'s 10 & 11. On a motion by Ms. Neihardt, seconded by Mr. Keleher, the Board voted to defer the application for restudy. The vote was 5-0.

REASON: The Board felt an additional structure report by a structural engineer with historic preservation experience was needed in order to determine if the south wall needed to be maintained, partially demolished, or demolished and rebuilt.

SPEAKERS: Ted Shine, applicant, spoke in support
Ron Diehl, 117 South Alfred Street, spoke in opposition
Lawrence O'Connor, representing Historic Alexandria Foundation, spoke in opposition

Update: Since the public hearing of February 15th the applicant has obtained the opinion of a structural engineer with expertise in historic preservation regarding the south wall of the carriage house. In the opinion of the structural engineer the wall is severely compromised and needs to be taken down and rebuilt. Except for the south wall, the opinion of Staff has not changed.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends:

1. Approval of the demolition and rebuilding of the south wall according to the plans provided by James Madison Cutts, LLC.; and,
2. Denial of the request to demolish portions of the second level of the west wall for window openings

NOTE: This docket item requires a roll call vote.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish portions of the freestanding carriage house at the rear of 115 South Alfred Street. The south wall of the carriage house is proposed to be demolished so that a replacement wall can be built and three new openings for windows will be created at the second level of the west elevation.

II. HISTORY:

115 South Alfred Street is a two story brick rowhouse dating from the early 19th century according to Ethelyn Cox in *Alexandria Street by Street* (p.2). The two story brick carriage house at the rear of the property appears to date from the middle of the 19th century.

III. ANALYSIS:

In considering a Permit to Demolish, the Board must consider the following criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, §10-105(B):

- (1) Is the building or structure of such architectural or historical interest that its moving, removing, capsulating or razing would be to the detriment of the public interest?
- (2) Is the building or structure of such interest that it could be made into a historic shrine?
- (3) Is the building or structure of such old and unusual or uncommon design, texture and material that it could not be reproduced or be reproduced only with great difficulty?
- (4) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve the memorial character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway?
- (5) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve and protect an historic place or area of historic interest in the city?
- (6) Would retention of the building or structure promote the general welfare by maintaining and increasing real estate values, generating business, creating new positions, attracting tourists, students, writers, historians, artists and artisans, attracting new residents, encouraging study and interest in American history, stimulating interest and study in architecture and design, educating citizens in American culture and heritage, and making the city a more attractive and desirable place in which to live?

South Wall

The applicant proposes to demolish the south wall because it appears to be in poor structural condition. Staff had an opportunity to view the interior elevation of the south wall on 2/6/06.

As noted above, the applicant has retained the services of James Madison Cutts, a noted structural engineer with expertise in historic preservation. It is his opinion that the south wall is “in marginal structural condition and should be rebuilt on a new footing.” Based upon this new information, Staff has no objection to the removal and rebuilding of the south wall as long as it is rebuilt according to the plans provided by James Madison Cutts, LLC.



Figure 1 Upper portion of existing interior south wall



Figure 2 Lower portion of existing interior south wall

Window Openings

The three new window openings are proposed to be created where there is currently an unaltered wall. In the opinion of Staff, creating new openings in an otherwise unaltered 19th century wall will substantially undermine not only the historic architectural integrity of the carriage house, but will fundamentally alter the overall public perception of a utilitarian outbuilding. New windows on the west elevation will, in the opinion of Staff, create a false sense about this structure giving it a 21st century appearance rather than retaining the utilitarian character of the structure.

In considering the criteria set forth above, it is the opinion of Staff, Criteria 1,3, 5 & 6 are met in this instance. However, because of the compromised structural integrity of the south wall Staff has no objection to its removal and rebuilding. Staff does, however, oppose the removal of sections of the west wall for the installation of new windows.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends:

1. Approval of the demolition and rebuilding of the south wall according to the plans

provided by James Madison Cutts, LLC; and,

2. Denial of the request to demolish portions of the second level of the west wall for window openings.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Legend: C - code requirement R - recommendation S - suggestion F - finding

Code Enforcement:

- C-1 All exterior walls within 5 feet from an interior property line shall have a fire resistance rating of 1 hour, from both sides of the wall. As alternative, a 2 hour fire wall may be provided. This condition is also applicable to skylights within setback distance. Openings in exterior walls between 3 and 5 feet shall not exceed 25% of the area of the entire wall surface (This shall include bay windows). Openings shall not be permitted in exterior walls within 3 feet of an interior lot line.

- C-2 Prior to the issuance of a demolition permit or land disturbance permit, a rodent abatement plan shall be submitted to Code Enforcement that will outline the steps that will taken to prevent the spread of rodents from the construction site to the surrounding community and sewers.

- C-3 Roof drainage systems must be installed so as neither to impact upon, nor cause erosion/damage to adjacent property.

- C-4 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).

- C-5 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).

- C-6 Construction permits are required for this project. Plans shall accompany the permit application that fully detail the construction as well as layouts and schematics of the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems.

- C-7 Permission from adjacent property owners is required if access to the adjacent properties is required to complete the proposed construction. Otherwise, a plan shall be submitted to demonstrate the construction techniques utilized to keep construction solely on the referenced property.

Historic Alexandria:

Alterations seem appropriate, but is it necessary to completely replace original brick on south wall?